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ABSTRACT

Bilingual programs should focus on promoting psychosocial growth rather than language growth. Risk taking, change, and creativity should characterize the approach to bilingual education. Traditional ideas about language learning may not be suitable. It is not necessarily true that children cannot learn a second language unless it is taught to them. The behavioristic, audiolingual approach may not be the best for the bilingual child. Bilingual educators should not be overly concerned about the orthodoxy of their methods. The corrective approach to language teaching may not be the most appropriate one for the young bilingual child. Promoting psychosocial growth involves educating teachers and generating community involvement. The students must be given the basic tools to manage their own growth in two languages at an early age. (VM)

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FACILITATING THE SELF-ACTUALIZATION OF FRANCO-AMERICANS[1]

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[1]This paper was presented at the TESOL Convention, March, 1971.

In his Crisis in Education, Silberman indicts us for our mindlessness or our tendency to confuse day to day routine with purpose, and our particular obsession for educating for docility.

He condemns teacher training institutions for turning out competent technicians for the schools as they are when they could training innovators.

One important cause of our present uncomfortable situation, he claims, is that we don't often ask ourselves why we are doing what we are doing, nor do we inquire into the consequences of what we decide to do.[2]

[2]Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom, (New York: Random House, 1970).

This paper, then, is a partial response to Silberman's request for a re-evaluation of purpose. More specifically, it is designed to generate some re-thinking concerning the bilingual education of Franco-Americans.

It includes brief comments on past Franco-Americans attempts at bilingual education in New England, as well as a more detailed examination of some of the assumptions which seem to underlie current bilingual programs. These considerations, as well as an

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examination of the situation of Acadian Americans in Northern Maine will lead to the conclusion that there is a need for a qualitative shift of focus in bilingual education. An outline of what that shift might entail will be presented.

Previous programs for Franco-Americans in New England

Until the early 1950's. Franco-Americans in New England managed to maintain many bilingual parcohial elementary and high schools. At that time, interest in cultural diversity smacked a bit of unpatriotism. Pastors of French Roman Catholic Churches were important forces for the maintenance of French, and they would argue that if we ever lost our French, we would soon lose the faith.

At school, much time was spent on French spelling, grammar, and religion. Since we were destined to keep the culture, we were forced to spend many hours studying the religious and military history of French Canada, where, if you'll allow a little French, the heros "travaillaient toujours à la sueur de leurs fronts", but somehow, never seemed to win.

The mood that I remember from those days is that of the frustration of a people which had little cause to be optimistic. Our forefathers had been cut down at the Plains of Abraham and all we could do was to try to hang on to a life style in which we were losing confidence. Neither our education, nor our attitude towards life gave us any confidence that we could, as individuals, or as a group, negotiate a happier more fruitful life.

Later during the 1950's, these parochial schools became completely anglicized, creating conditions similiar to those which lead Leonard Covello to state that "we are becoming Americans by learning how to be ashamed of our parents".[3]

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[3]Quoted by Silberman op.cit. (p.58)

In the 1960's, Gerard Brault, with the help of Bruce Gaarder, was able to obtain NDEA monies to initiate a series of Franco-American Summer Institutes. He was also funded to write the Franco-American Materials, a series of remedial audio-lingual exercises interspersed with readings which dealt mainly with life in France and in French Canada. Unfortunately, these materials, written mainly for Junior and Senior high school students, did not seem to produce any noticeable rebirth of bilingual education.

Can we learn from these experiences in retrospect? The purpose of the church's investment in bilingual education was to maintain a religion. The purpose of the second was to revitalize interest in bilingual growth through audio-lingual techniques. Neither approach reflected any great awareness that bilingualism is a modern societal phenomenon which might best be maintained if bilinguals develop favorable attitudes towards themselves in the here and now, rather than towards a people who lived in a different age and/or another country. Neither perspective helped Franco-Americans (FA's) learn how to negotiate their own growth without having to become retreaded anglos.

It is possible that a greater awareness for bilingualism as a societal phenomenon, with all which that entails in terms of psychosocial growth might have lead to a greater success in maintaining Franco-American bilingualism.

Current bilingual programs for groups other than Franco-Americans.

Let us now turn to an examination of assumptions which seem to underlie non-Franco-American bilingual programs.

Here again, we fail to see much concern for societal growth. Indeed, many, if not most, programs seem to operate under the assumption that the primary purpose of bilingual projects should be to develop language programs or packages which lead, preferably, to language standardization.

Before Franco-Americans decide to follow this path, let us examine the validity of some of the assumptions upon which thev operate.

The first assumption is that young children cannot learn a second language unless it is taught to them.

Is this necessarily true? Not always. Lambert's research in Montreal raises the fascinating possibility that, at least for some students, the best language program might be no language program at all.[4]

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[4]Marilyn Samuels, Allan G. Reynolds, and Wallace Lambert, "Communicational Efficiency of Children Schooled in a Foreign Language", Journal of Educational Psychology (1969, Vol.60, No.5)

W.E. Lambert, M. Just, and N. Segalowitz, "Some Cognitive Consequences of Following the Curricula of the Early School Grades in a Foreign Language". Georgetown Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics. (Number 23, 1970)

In Lambert's project, students are not taught French as a language, but are taught content entirely in French. Yet, they learn French readily and their facility in English does not seem to be retarded.

It might just be that, given a model and an appropriate context, children can learn a second language effectively without studying it directly.

There is a corollary to the first assumption. It is that a second language must be learned differently from the first. No one seems to have really established this, especially in regards to young children.

On the contrary, Cooper argues that there is "little reason to expect...that a second language is learned in any fundamentally different way than a first language".[5]

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[5]Robert L. Cooper, "What Do We Learn When We Learn a Language?", TESOL Quarterly (Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 312).

What would happen, I wonder, if we planned curricula as though languages could only be learned and not taught?

The second assumption implied in current bilingual programs is that, if languages need be taught, they are best taught via the behavioristic audio-lingual approach. This hypothesis is currently being challenged on theoretical as well as practical grounds. Jakobovits states that this method "has failed to produce meaningful foreign language achievement in the vast majority of students exposed to it".[6]

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[6]Leon A. Jakobovits, Foreign Language Learning: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of the Issues. (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House

Publishers, 1970, p.26 and passim) cf. also the literature cited by Jakobovits.

Besides the arguments raised by Jakobovits, bilingual educators should remember that the audio-lingual approach succeeded with a highly select group of well motivated literate soldiers who had a limited amount of time and who did nothing but concentrate on learning the one language. Bilingual children beginning elementary school represent a very different kind of population. Also, they have much more time in which to acquire a language.[7]

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[7]Besides, the unrealness of the pattern drill approach can easily deteriorate to getting students to do tricks with words... to getting them to jump through someone else's favorite linguistic hoops, thus encouraging them to abdicate the responsibility for their own language growth. Anyone who regularly interrupts pattern drills to ask students what they are saying knows what I mean.

All this to say that perhaps bilingual educators should not be overly concerned about the orthodoxy of their methods, because yesterday's orthodoxy does not look so solid. At this point, it is good for us to recall Dwight Allen's statement to the White House Conference on Education: "We are entering a time when the risks of maintaining the status quo are as great, or greater, than the risk of exploring educational alternatives".[8]

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[8]Dwight D. Allen, "Mythology in American Education: A Guide to Constructive Confrontation", University of Massachusetts, (mimeo draft) p. 12.

The third assumption under which many bilingual programs seem to operate is that bilinguals suffer from linguistic (and,

probably conceptual) deficits. Such programs usually concern themselves in great part with remediation via corrective drills. Educators who support this position usually insist that, among other things, students be forced to speak a standard dialect.

Now it may be noble of us to want our students to speak just as we do, but is it that evident that they should, especially during the early school years?

In a very compelling article, Labov attacks some of the assumptions upon which the deficit approach is based. Among other things, he questions whether middle-class language habits really are as helpful as we might think for the critical learning functions of analyzing and generalizing.[9]

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[9]William Labov, "The Logic of Non-standard English", Georgetown Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics (No.22, 1966, p.12)

Even if we do decide that the corrective approach is the best, what do we know about the timing and effectiveness of teacher interventions in getting students to use standard speech? According to Goodman, Labov's research in New York seems to indicate that divergent speakers do not seem to make a conscious effort to use language forms which they recognize as socially preferred until adolescence.[10] If this is so, it may not be realistic to give a great amount of early elementary instructional time to remediation.

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[10]Kenneth Goodman, "Let's Dump the Uptight Model in English" Elementary School Journal (October 1969).

Since we are discussing models, it might be healthy for us to remember that because of this country's previous attitudes toward bilingual groups, they have not really had much of a chance to grow to their full potential. Maybe, given the right context for growth, a bilingual model will emerge which will make the current middle class anglo model obsolete. We don't know. The point is, if bilingual educators do indeed need deficit models, they might be focussing on inappropriate ones.

Normand Dube argues that we should spend less time in re-education and more on trying to promote growth. I quote:

"In the preparation of an Academic syllabus for Franco-American students in high school, the investigator suggests that two directions for educational experience be considered. The first is growth and the second is change. Experiences for growth will be those which contribute to the student's language and cultural development, based upon his ability to learn. The experiences for change will be those which can assist the student in perceiving behavioral patterns in his language and cultural performance different from those, other French-speaking persons outside his ethnic group. He may then choose to conform or not to conform to the new learned language and cultural norms of behavior".

"Normand Dube, "Guidelines for the Teaching of French to Franco-Americans", (PhD Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1971, p. 180).

Such an attitude appears more conducive to permitting the bilingual to rise to his own potential, a potential, I remind you again, which neither you nor I can foresee at this time.

In short, given the fragility of some of our assumptions regarding language learning, it is difficult to understand why so much bilingual time, money, and energy seems to focus on language remediation. Let us hope that it isn't simply because it is easier to earn good accountability grades with short term language objectives.

In search of an alternative.

It is not possible to go on to suggest different directions for FA programs without relating them to particular needs of people. In the case of Project FABRIC, an ESEA Title III bilingual change program, the people involved are Acadian-Americans from Northern Maine. When the project was initiated in 1968, the following conditions obtained for the area:

(a) These people, 90% of whom are French speaking, were geographically isolated from the rest of Maine.

(b) Because of state and local regulations against the use of French in schools, French speaking parents, students, and teachers had little self-esteem.

(c) People had a very negative image of the French they spoke. Typical teacher comments during the early stages of the project were: "Our French is bad", "Our French cannot be written", "Maybe it is okay to use French in school but mine is so bad that I'll lose my job if this project continues". On the other hand, some had been so scarred by their experiences as bilinguals, that one teacher said: "The day they bring French back to our schools, that's the day I resign".

(d) A good segment of the community members were from a low-socio-economic level. They seemed to have little hope for the future.

(e) Teachers and students lived under a very autocratic administration, one which did not seem to be conducive to the creative risk-taking required for long term community growth.

So, because we had doubts about the efficacity of current programs for language growth, because of the negative self-image of the community members, because bilingualism is a societal phenomenon, and because we believe that program maintenance should be built into the program from the very beginning, it was decided that the project should focus on bringing about changes in the affective and imaginative domains, at least as much as in the cognitive and language domains. In short, psy-

chosocial growth took a precedence over language growth so that the school system might move to a new maturitv, a maturitv which Fritz Perls has so well defined as "the transcendence from environmental support to self-support".[12]

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[12]Fritz Perls, Gestalt Therapy Verbation, Lafayette, California, Real People Press, 1969, p.28. See also his statement that "Learning is nothing but discovery that something is possible. To teach means to show a person that something is possible". (p. 36).

If, indeed, some educators still feel that bilingual education should still focus on language growth, perhaps they might at least consider relating language growth with personal growth. Hopefully, they will try to meet Freire's suggestions that language programs attempt to relate "speaking the word to transforming reality, and to man's role in this transformation."[13]

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[13]Paulo Freire, Cultural Action for Freedom, (Harvard Educational Review and Center for the Study of Development and Social Change. Monograph Series No. 1, 1970, p. 13).

Freire argues that:

> "Speaking the word is not a true act if it is not at the same time associated with the right of self-expression and world-expression, of creating and re-creating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical process".[14]

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[14]op. cit. p. 12.

We have suggested that it might be profitable for bilingual programs to focus on promoting psychosocial growth. What does this entail in terms of student and teacher behavior? Here are some suggestions adapted from Armington.[15]

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[15]David E. Armington, "A Plan for Continuing Growth", (Newton, Educational Development Center, mimeo, 1969, p. 8).

-Initiate activities. Be self-directing. Take responsibility for their own learning.
-Be capable of intense involvement. Develop a curiosity which leads to concern and beyond concern, to commitment.
-Continue to wonder and to imagine and bring a sense of humor into the classroom.
-Be willing to take risks, to face uncertainty and change, to tackle complexities which they have not been taught how to manage.
-Be unafraid of being wrong. Respect themselves, their language, others, and the environment. Learn responsibility as an integral part of freedom.

Here's another list more specifically addressed to bilingual concerns:

-Come to appreciate the richness of diversity.
-Be able to communicate in both languages in cognitive, affective and imaginative domains.
-Be unafraid of negotiating with peers, adults and people from different backgrounds.
-Accept differences in others.
-Be able to resolve conflicts with peers and superiors.
-Be aware of specific ways in which dialects diverge.
-Be aware of the various functions of different languages and/or dialects.

Teacher education.

Unfortunately, such goals are easier to brainstorm than to implement because they cannot be fulfilled without the personal investment of students and teachers - and that is not something you dictate.

One way to get teachers to sense the potential they still possess for exciting growth is to make it possible for them to experience a T-Group or a personal growth laboratory. This is usually an effective educational experience because:

> "A personal growth laboratory creates an interpersonal world which disconfirms much of what people have learned in the world outside, affirms the possibility of a different world outside, and provides a partial model of what it could be like."[16]

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[16]"Herbert A. Shepard, "Personal Growth Laboratories: Toward an Alternative Culture". Journal of Applied Behavioral Science. (Vol. 6 No. 3, 1970, p. 260).

Project FABRIC began its first summer institute with a two week laboratory, and has been making labs available to teachers on a regular basis since then. Whenever possible, content consultants also go through these labs.

One important by-product of the labs is that most teachers and consultants experienced, therein, the qualitative difference which might be possible in education through a greater focus on process.

Ideally, it is best to include administrative personnel in such workshops. Some might feel more comfortable attending a lab outside the school district, where they do not come into immediate contact with their teachers.

Our teachers also got content inputs: exercises in creativity, brainstorming, and team development; lectures on psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and on the structures and dialects of French and English. Teachers were allowed to walk out of lectures

if they were seen to be irrelevant to their needs. This proved to be a rather disconcerting, though healthy, experience for the linguistic consultant to go through. I will not go any further into the description of the teacher training except to say that it was always made clear to them that they could re-negotiate the content and the process of their learning experiences. Some teachers are now treating their own classes in the same way.

Project administration.

After the first summer institute, it was decided that the direction of the project should be placed in the hands of local teachers, to promote even greater teacher investment and to assure project maintenance after the termination of federal funding. The director - at first, there were co-directors - was selected by the teachers themselves and approved by the school board.

Because we seemed to be in agreement that "imposed change, whether from outside the system or from outside the classroom is seldom effective and enduring"[17] it was decided that the program's

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[17]Armington, op. cit. p. 14

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advisor would not try to sell packages or ready-made programs. So, when he was hired, during the second year of operation, his goal was to extend the potential of the teachers, and get them to use more and more French, in class. He would do whatever he could to make change self-sustaining.

At first, some teachers were afraid to use French in his presence because, again, of their negative self-image.

Gradually, this wore off and elementary school teachers began using French in class on a regular basis.

Since the advisor came out of a university environment where his specialty was linguistics and foreign language education, he had to spend quite some time in lower elementary school classrooms learning about the real world.

During the school year, he had to adjust his expectations because the level of teacher creativity and risk-taking was not as high as during the summer institutes.

Community involvement.

Attempts were made to generate community involvement to assure long term maintenance. During the first year, teachers held open meetings with parents to discuss the program and respond to questions. They also visited homes individually to get feedback.

During the second year, two free service courses were offered to parents, in the hopes of getting them further involved. One, called a Talk-In on Education, was aimed at encouraging teachers, parents and students to dialogue concerning their personal concerns for education. Another, aimed at parents of pre-schoolers, was designed to help them facilitate the growth of their children. They discussed current theories about learning and growth, and observed their children interacting with others via video-tape. We are not satisfied that this was enough.

Materials

It is our belief that materials should be of such a nature as to be helpful without requiring that the teacher become well versed in linguistics or psychology, or whatever.

Also, these materials should not require that a class go through a long series of lock steps, since lock steps take the control of learning away from the learner and encourage him to be passive. Neither should materials foster strong teacher dependencies.

Some materials were bought: French reference materials, grammars, student encyclopedias, French stories for elementary school children, etc. Other materials were produced by the project.

Readers which use the local French and which contain stories generated to foster a better self-image have been published for lower elementary grade students. They are of such a nature that junior high school students are already saying that they can write stories which are just as good, and are doing so. We are mimeographing some of the booklets they write, so that others can use them.

At the lower elementary grades, students are drawing their story booklets and dictating their own narratives to the teachers. These booklets are duplicated on spirit masters and shared with other students, as well as with parents.

Also, a set of six programmed French literacy booklets are being produced to see if they could not be of some assistance to some students.

Further, social studies units are being designed. After the first summer institute, a kindergarten teacher decided to become a textbook designer rather than to remain a textbook user. She planned materials which capitalized on the children's experiences in the St. John Valley.

Another teacher, the one who had sworn she would resign if the project went bilingual, joined in. Their work became the nucleus of new bilingual social studies units for kindergarten to third grade students.

Further, a recently published English social sciences laboratory program, designed for the psycho-social growth of fourth to sixth graders by a well known social psychologist is being translated into French for local use.

This program helps students to make fairly sophisticated observations concerning human behavior in an existential context. In this program, the classroom, the school and the community become laboratories for learning such things as how to measure attitudes, and take surveys, the nature and causes of friendly and unfriendly behavior, etc...

It is our hope that this approach will help extend any attitudes of openness to growth, risk taking, change and creativity, giving these students basic tools to manage their own growth, in two languages, and at an early age.

Perhaps, then, we shall have met our purpose of creating a climate for sustained growth within this bilingual community. We can't say for sure. We do know that we agree that: "In an era of radical change such as the present, no approach is more impractical than one which takes the present arrangements and practices as given ..."[18]

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[18]Silberman, on. cit. p. 4.

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